

---

## Supplemental Security Income

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides income support to persons aged 65 or older, blind or disabled adults, and blind or disabled children. Eligibility requirements and federal payment standards are nationally uniform. The 1999 federal SSI benefit rate for an individual living in his or her own household and with no other countable income is \$500 monthly; for a couple (with both husband and wife eligible), the SSI benefit rate is \$751 monthly.

---

### Program Summary

---

Payments under SSI began in January 1974. It replaced the former federal-state adult assistance programs in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Residents of the Northern Mariana Islands became eligible for SSI in January 1998.

Under the SSI program, each eligible person is provided a monthly cash payment based on a statutory federal benefit rate. Since 1975, these rates have been increased by the same percentage as the cost-of-living increases in OASDI benefits. If an individual or couple is living in another person's household and is receiving both food and shelter from the person in whose household they are living, the federal benefit rate is reduced by one-third. This is done instead of determining the actual dollar value of the in-kind support and maintenance.

For institutionalized persons, the eligibility requirements and payment standards depend on the type of institution. With some exceptions, inmates of public institutions are ineligible for SSI. For persons institutionalized for a complete calendar month, a maximum federal SSI payment of \$30 per month applies where (1) the institution receives a substantial part of the cost of the person's care from the Medicaid program, or (2) recipients' under age 18 whose private health insurance is making payments to the institution. Other eligible persons in institutions may receive up to the full federal benefit rate.

The federal payment is based on the individual's countable income. The first \$20 monthly in OASDI benefits or other earned or unearned income is

not counted. Also excluded is \$65 monthly of earnings plus one-half of any earnings above \$65. For example, a person living in his or her own household, whose sole income is a \$200 monthly OASDI benefit, would receive \$320 in federal SSI payments:

$$\begin{aligned} \$500 - (\$200 - \$20) &= \\ (\$500 - \$180) &= \$320. \end{aligned}$$

A person whose income consists of \$500 in gross monthly earnings would receive \$292.50 in federal SSI payments:

$$\begin{aligned} \$500 - [(\$500 - \$85) / 2] &= \\ (\$500 - \$207.50) &= \$292.50. \end{aligned}$$

Individuals generally are not eligible for SSI if they have resources in excess of \$2,000 (or \$3,000 for a couple). Certain resources are excluded, most commonly a home, an automobile used for essential transportation, and household goods and personal effects of reasonable value, burial plots and spaces, and life.

States have the option to supplement the federal SSI payment for all or selected categories of persons, regardless of previous state program eligibility. Initially, states were required to supplement to assure that recipients did not suffer a loss in total income from the former state programs. Most of these "converted" cases have now left the rolls.